

# Hesitant to get younger kids vaccinated? Vaccinating children is key to ending pandemic

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As U.S. health officials prepare to authorize Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for emergency use in younger children, a new poll shows that less than a

third of parents would get their child vaccinated as soon as the shots are approved for kids.

Only 29% of parents of children under age 18 said they would get their child vaccinated "right away," according to data published Thursday by Kaiser Family Foundation.

Another 32% said they would wait to see how the vaccine is working before getting their child a shot, while the remaining parents said their child would be vaccinated only if their school requires it (15%) or they definitely wouldn't be vaccinated (19%).

Public health experts have said that vaccinating children is key to ending the pandemic.

Pfizer's vaccine is already authorized in the United States for people ages 16 and up, while two others—from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson—are authorized for those 18 and older.

The survey percentages did not stray far from what was seen among American adults late last year in another Kaiser survey. In that survey, 34% of adults said they would get a vaccine as soon as possible, and 39% said they would wait and see.

Those attitudes have shifted over time. The latest data, from April, shows about 64% of American adults say they've either already gotten a vaccine or would get one as soon as possible, while a further 15% say they will wait and see.

"We're in a new stage of talking about vaccine demand," Mollyann Brodie, executive vice president of Kaiser's Public Opinion and Survey Research Program, told *The New York Times*. "There's not going to be a single strategy to increase demand across everyone who is left. There

will have to be a lot of individually targeted efforts. The people still on the fence have logistical barriers, information needs, and lots don't yet know they are eligible. Each strategy might move a small number of people to get vaccinated, but all together, that could matter a lot."

In Thursday's Kaiser survey, parents' intentions for their children typically mirrored their intentions for themselves. Among parents who have already received at least one dose or want it as soon as possible, three-fourths said they would get their children vaccinated right away (48%) or wait and see (29%).

The latest survey by the non-profit health research group was conducted April 15-29 among 2,097 adults.

Pfizer and Moderna are already testing their vaccines in children as young as 6 months old and expect to ask the FDA for emergency use authorization covering infants and children later this year. Pfizer expects to submit for emergency use authorization for children ages 2 to 11 in September, *CNN* reported.

As of Friday, nearly 45% of the U.S. population had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and nearly 33% were fully vaccinated, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among those 18 and older, about 57% have had at least one dose and nearly 41% are fully vaccinated.

## **Biden backs proposal to lift patent protections on vaccines**

The Biden administration announced this week that it will support a controversial proposal to waive patent protections for coronavirus vaccines, while the drug industry warned such a move would actually

dampen the development of vaccines.

The United States had been a holdout at the World Trade Organization over the proposal, which could give drugmakers around the world a look at the trade secrets of how the viable COVID-19 vaccines have been made, the *Times* reported. But President Joe Biden has come under pressure to throw his support behind the proposal, the newspaper reported.

Katherine Tai, the United States trade representative, announced the administration's support for the proposal on Wednesday afternoon.

"This is a [global health crisis](#), and the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures," she said in a statement. "The administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for COVID-19 vaccines."

Tai said the United States would participate in negotiations over the matter, but that those talks would "take time, given the consensus-based nature of the institution and the complexity of the issues involved."

Shortly after the decision was announced, the pharmaceutical industry issued a statement that assailed the extraordinary decision. Stephen Uhl, president and chief executive of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, called the announcement "an unprecedented step that will undermine our global response to the pandemic and compromise safety."

"This decision will sow confusion between public and private partners, further weaken already strained supply chains and foster the proliferation of counterfeit vaccines," he said, adding that the move would have the effect of "handing over American innovations to

countries looking to undermine our leadership in biomedical discovery."

But global health activists praised the administration's decision. It is "a truly historic step, which shows that President Biden is committed to being not just an American leader, but a global one," said Priti Krishtel, an executive director of the Initiative for Medicines, Access & Knowledge.

Still, the activists said a waiver alone would not increase the world's vaccine supply. It must be accompanied by a process known as "tech transfer," in which patent holders supply technical know-how and personnel.

"Handing needy countries a recipe book without the ingredients, safeguards and sizable work force needed will not help people waiting for the vaccine," Dr. Michelle McMurry-Heath, president and chief executive of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization, told the *Times*. "Handing them the blueprint to construct a kitchen that—in optimal conditions—can take a year to build will not help us stop the emergence of dangerous new COVID variants."

Craig Garthwaite, a professor of strategy at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, also noted that, unlike many drugs, the coronavirus vaccines are complex technologies that will be difficult to copy without the help of the companies that developed them.

"People think you're going to pick up this patent and read it like a cheesecake recipe, and make this awesome cheesecake," he told the *Times*. "You really want Moderna and Pfizer helping you."

## **Biden sets new goal as vaccination rates drop**

As coronavirus vaccination rates start to slow in the United States,

President Joe Biden set a new goal to deliver at least one shot to 70% of adult Americans by July 4 while he tries to convince the hesitant to get inoculated.

Some states are leaving more than half of their available doses unordered, so Biden also announced this week that his administration will now shift doses from states with less need to states with greater demand for shots, the *Associated Press* reported. He also called for states to make vaccines available on a walk-in basis, and he will tell pharmacies to do the same.

"You do need to get vaccinated," Biden said from the White House Tuesday. "Even if your chance of getting seriously ill is low, why take the risk? It could save your life or the lives of somebody you love."

Dr. Eric Topol, a professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research in California, told the *Times* he was "overjoyed" by the announcement. He had pushed for loosening vaccine allocation limits last month, when Michigan was struggling with a virus surge and could not get desperately needed extra vaccine doses.

The federal government's new flexibility will allow for states to respond rapidly when they see "the temperatures rising on the heat map of the country," Topol told the *Times*.

The United States is now administering first doses at a rate of about 965,000 per day—half the rate of three weeks ago, but almost twice as fast as needed to meet Biden's new target, the *AP* reported.

"I'd like to get it to 100%, but I think realistically we can get to that place between now and July Fourth," Biden said of his new goal.

His administration will target three areas as it tries to hasten the pace of

vaccinations:

- Adults who need more convincing to take the vaccine.
- Those who have struggled or are in no hurry to obtain a shot.
- Adolescents aged 12-15, once federal authorities approve vaccination for that age group.

Ahead of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's expected authorization of the Pfizer [vaccine](#) for kids aged 12 to 15, the White House is also developing plans to speed vaccinations for that age group. Biden urged states to administer at least one dose to their adolescents by July 4 and to deliver doses to pediatricians' offices and other trusted locations, with the aim of getting many young people fully vaccinated by the start of the next school year, the *AP* reported.

As of Thursday, the U.S. [coronavirus](#) case count passed 32.5 million, while the death toll topped 580,000, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University. Worldwide, over 156.1 million cases had been reported by Thursday, with more than 3.2 million people dead from COVID-19.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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